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Indian Summer

Autumn Poems and Sketches

L. Clarkson.

To American poets only
I am indebted for
these verses, and to
the woods of Maryland
for the studies.

New York
E. P. Dutton & Company
39 West 23rd St.
1883.





Dedicated
to my mother,
whom, with culture
and ability
for any pleasurable
life, I have ever
known in woman's most
patient sphere, untiring
house-keeper, arduous
care-taker, faithful
home-maker.
L.B.W. Christmas 1881.

The sunsets
golden, most
serene, the Indian
full sunset land,
beeds lovingly down.

What we
have mis-
named the
shady side
fifty is in
side, the
mellow, the
supper,
where, the
most
of
fact
most
the beauty
heartless
earthly
child.

L. Clarkson

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MY GIFT.



HAVE not brought thee, Friend, this time,
My passing thought or random rhyme ;
I choose a theme that, like a call,
Shall echo in the hearts of all ;
Then spread my page, and wait to see
What gracious gifts will come to me,
To make my offering meet for thee.
I ask my Woods to paint the strange
And subtle beauty of their change :
And, lo ! beneath my hand I trace
The very look of Nature's face :—
This to my Book shall give its grace.
I ask the Poets for their songs,
And each one drops where it belongs
A feather from his ready wing—
For Poets soar the while they sing :
These to my Book its worth shall bring.

And last of all, before I send
My Gift, *that thou mayest love me, Friend,*
And not that thou wilt grant me fame,
I pause and write for thee my name
Upon a flower, across a leaf,
To speak my message bright and brief :
For thee may Indian Summer days
Be crowned with love and light and praise,
When hope and passion are but ember,
Sweeter than June be thy November ;
Brighter, because the sunset land
That knows no shadow is at hand ;
Richer, for harvesting is done,
And life's long effort has been won ;
And gay desire and sodden grief
Have vanished with the scarlet leaf.
For with our Autumn comes this truth :
Contentment is not born of youth,
And Memory can more joy disclose
Than Hope in all her heyday knows.

A RED ROSE IN SEPTEMBER.

H. H.

O WILD red rose! What spell has stayed
Till now thy summer of delights?
Where hid the south wind when he laid
His heart on thine, these autumn nights?

O wild red rose! Two faces glow
At sight of thee, and two hearts share
All thou and thy south wind can know
Of sunshine in this autumn air.

O sweet wild rose! O strong south wind!
The sunny roadside asks no reasons
Why we such secret summer find,
Forgetting calendars and seasons!

Alas, red rose! Thy petals wilt;
Our loving hands tend thee in vain;
Our thoughtless touch seems like a guilt;
Ah, could we make thee live again!

Yet joy, wild rose! Be glad, south wind!
Immortal wind! Immortal rose!
Ye shall live on in two hearts shrined,
With secrets which no words disclose!



IN THE INDIAN SUMMER.

JOAQUIN MILLER.

THE squirrels chattered in the leaves,
The turkeys call'd from paw-paw wood,
The deer with lifted nostrils stood,
And humming-birds did wind and weave,
Swim round about, dart in and out,
Through fragrant forest edge made red,
Made many colored overhead
By climbing blossoms sweet with bee
And yellow rose of Cherokee.
Then frost came by and touched the leaves;
Then time hung ices on the eaves;
Then cushion-snows possessed the ground,
And so the seasons kept their round.
Yet still old Morgan went and came
From cabin door to forest dim,
Through wold of snows, through wood of flame,
Through golden Indian-Summer days
Hung round in soft September haze;—
And no man crossed or questioned him.



The Last Rose.

SEPTEMBER.

TO THE FRINGED GENTIAN.

SEPTEMBER.

BAYARD TAYLOR.

WHEN the maple turns to crimson,
And the beechen leaves to gold;
When the gentian's in the meadow,
And the aster on the wold;
When the noon is lapped in vapor,
And the night is frosty cold;

Through the rustling woods I wander,
Through the jewels of the year,
From the yellow uplands calling,
Seeking her that is so dear:
She is near me in the Autumn,—
She, the beautiful, is near.

.

And I think when days are sweetest
And the world is wholly fair,
She may sometimes steal upon me
Through the dimness of the air,
With the cross upon her bosom
And the amaranth in her hair.

—♦—

TO THE FRINGED GENTIAN.

WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT.

THOU blossom bright with autumn dew,
And covered with the heaven's own blue,
That openest when the quiet light
Succeeds the keen and frosty night.

Thou comest not when violets lean
O'er wandering brooks and springs unseen,
Or columbines, in purple dressed,
Nod o'er the ground-bird's hidden nest.

Thou waitest late, and com'st alone,
When woods are bare and birds are flown,
And frosts and shortening days portend
The aged year is near his end.

Then doth thy sweet and quiet eye
Look through its fringes to the sky,
Blue—blue—as if that sky let fall
A flower from its cerulean wall.

I would that thus, when I shall see
The hour of death draw near to me,
Hope blossoming within my heart,
May look to heaven as I depart.



Maple Leaves.

FROM "AN INDIAN-SUMMER REVERIE."

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL.

WHAT visionary tints the year puts on,
When falling leaves falter through motionless air
Or numbly cling and shiver to be gone!
How shimmer the low flats and pastures bare,
As with her nectar Hebe Autumn fills
The bowl between me and those distant hills,
And smiles and shakes abroad her misty, tremulous hair!

No more the landscape holds its wealth apart,
Making me poorer in my poverty,
But mingles with my senses and my heart;
My own projected spirit seems to me
In her own reverie the world to steep;
'Tis she that waves to sympathetic sleep,
Moving as she is moved, each field and hill and tree.

How fuse and mix, with what unfelt degrees,
Clasped by the faint horizon's languid arms,
Each into each the hazy distances!
The softened season all the landscape charms;
Those hills, my native village that embay,
In waves of dreamier purple roll away,
And floating in mirage seem all the glimmering farms.

Far distant sounds the hidden chickadee
Close at my side; far distant sound the leaves;
The fields seem fields of dreams, where Memory
Wanders like gleaning Ruth; and as the sheaves
Of wheat and barley wavered in the eye
Of Boaz as the maiden's glow went by,
So tremble and seem remote all things the sense receives.

.

O'er yon bare knoll the pointed cedar shadows
Drowse on the crisp, gray moss; the ploughman's call
Creeps faint as smoke from black, fresh-furrowed meadows;
The single crow a single caw lets fall;
And all around me every bush and tree
Says Autumn's here, and Winter soon will be,
Who snows his soft, white sleep and silence over all.

The birch, most shy and lady-like of trees,
Her poverty, as best she may, retrieves,
And hints at her foregone gentilities
With some saved relics of her wealth of leaves;
The swamp-oak, with his royal purple on,
Glares red as blood across the sinking sun,
As one who prouder to a falling fortune cleaves.



Wood Asters.



OCTOBER VIOLETS.

OCTOBER VIOLETS.

WE stood at the edge of the forest,
The friend of my heart and I,
Where the sunset glow of the dogwood
Met the sunset glow of the sky.

The breath of the coming winter
Came down from the pine-clad hill ;
Its shadow crept over the landscape
And over our hearts its chill.

We talked of our sunny childhood,
Of hopes that long ago
We had watched with the opening blossoms
As lightly come and go.

The dreams of our early morning
Like the dew had passed away ;
Our skies of gold and crimson
Had turned to cloud and gray.

In the years that lay before us,
Half seen through the distant haze,
The winters grew drearily longer,
And briefer the summer days.

Like a breath from the far-off Southland
Came a fragrance faint and sweet,
And behold !—blue violets nestled
Low down in the grass at our feet.

As brightly they bloomed in their beauty
At the close of this autumn day,
As when they were tenderly nestled
In the cherishing arms of May.

Then one to the other spoke softly,
“Oh, friend! let our grievings cease ;
Let us take to our hearts this message
Of summer time and peace ;

“Let us lift our eyes to the future
With a steady, trustful gaze ;
For violets still are waiting
To bloom in October days.”



L. Clarkson

THE HUSKERS.

AFTERMATH.

FROM "THE HUSKERS."

JOHN G. WHITTIER.

It was late in mild October, and the long autumnal rain
Had left the summer harvest-fields all green with grass again.
The first sharp frosts had fallen, leaving all the woodlands gay
With the hues of summer's rainbow on the meadow-flowers of May.

Through a thin dry mist, that morning, the Sun rose broad and red,
At first a rayless disk of fire, he brightened as he sped;
Yet even his noontide glory fell chastened and subdued
On the cornfields and the orchards and softly pictured wood.

And all the quiet afternoon, slow sloping to the night,
He wove with golden shuttle the haze with golden light;
Slanting through the painted beeches he glorified the hill,
And beneath it pond and meadow lay brighter, greener still.

And shouting boys in woodland haunts caught glimpses of that sky,
Flecked by the many-tinted leaves, and laughed, they knew not why.
And school-girls, gay with aster-flowers, beside the meadow brooks
Mingled the glow of autumn with the sunshine of sweet looks.

From spire and barn looked westerly the patient weather-cocks;
But even the birches on the hill stood motionless as rocks.
No sound was in the woodlands save the squirrel's dropping shell,
And the yellow leaves among the boughs, low rustling as they fell.

— ... —

AFTERMATH.

HENRY W. LONGFELLOW.

WHEN the summer fields are mown,
When the birds are fledged and flown,
And the dry leaves strew the path;
With the falling of the snow,
With the cawing of the crow
Once again the fields we mow,
And gather in the aftermath.

Not the sweet, new grass with flowers
Is this harvesting of ours;
Not the upland clover bloom;
But the rowen mixed with weeds,
Tangled tufts from marsh and meads,
Where the poppy drops its seeds
In the silence and the gloom.



Beech Leaves.



AGAIN.

THE CLOSING SCENE.

AGAIN.

S. E. LOWELL.

So soon, so soon, the summer leaves are turning
To red and crimson, gold and russet brown;
So soon again the maple's fires are burning,
Lighting the hill-tops like a burnished crown—
Far off within the shadowy mist
Gleam purple, gold, and amethyst.

So soon, so soon, the summer leaves are dying,
The fair, green leaves that lived their little day
In joyous freedom, now around us lying,
Fading like many an earthly joy away—
And flutt'ring through the charmed air,
Trail golden splendors everywhere.

All gorgeous hues, all dyes of Tyrian splendor
Blossom and burn beneath the Master's hand;
They thrill us, fill us with a joy so tender
We reverent walk, as in some sacred land;
Or stand with claspèd hands to gaze
Upon the glory of these sad, sweet days.

O far-off hills! methinks your misty glory
Leads upward to the Eternal hills of Gold,
Where earth's decay, nor sin's unhallowed story,
Can vex nor mar the souls that ne'er grow old.
O Summer Land! we long for thee,
Bend down that we thy gates may see.



FROM "THE CLOSING SCENE."

T. BUCHANAN READ.

WITHIN his sober realm of leafless trees
The russet year inhaled the dreamy air;
Like some tanned reaper in his hour of ease,
When all the fields are lying brown and bare.

All sights were mellowed and all sounds subdued,
The hills seemed farther and the streams sang low;
As in a dream the distant woodman hewed
His winter log with many a muffled blow.

The embattled forests, erewhile armed in gold,
Their banners bright with every martial hue,
Now stood, like some sad beaten host of old,
Withdrawn afar in Time's remotest blue.



Autumnal Colors.

INDIAN-SUMMER'S AFTERMATH.

THE GRASS-WORLD.

INDIAN-SUMMER'S AFTERMATH.

ALICE E. LORD.

O DREAMY days that linger
With trace of summer yet !
So soft, so mild, so mellow,
Though breathing a regret !
Ye come, like farewell kisses,
When love must soon grow strange—
That cling with painful fervor
And bode the bitter change.

Ye come, with added glory
Of red and amber sheen—
The Summer's ripened beauty,
To supplement her green.
Ye pour this glory on us
In the sweet days of rest,
That our regret may deepen
To find the last, the best.

O peaceful days and golden !
Ye call back summer flowers,
For daisies and red clover
Peep out to count your hours.
Midst golden-rod and asters,
They wander, wondering
To see the autumn banners
Beneath the skies of spring.

So, into hearts well ripened
Spring joys may bloom again,
And tangled cares and losses
Find hope amid their pain.
That clover is the sweetest
Which blushes in the fall ;
That happiness completest
Which comes the last of all.

OCTOBER, 1879.

FROM "THE GRASS-WORLD."

MARY MAPES DODGE.

AH, the grass-world dies in the autumn days,
When, studded with sheaf and stack,
The fields lie browning in sullen haze,
And creak in the farmer's track.
Hushed is the tumult the daisies knew,—
The hidden sport of the supple crew ;
And lonely and dazed, in the glare of day,
The stiff-kneed hoppers refuse to play
In the stubble that mocks the blue.
For all things feel that the time is drear
When life runs low in the heart of the year.



Golden Rod & Clover

AUTUMN HYMN.

WE, TOO, HAVE AUTUMNS.

AUTUMN HYMN.

RICHARD H. NEWELL.

CHANGING, fading, falling, flying,
From the homes that gave them birth,
Autumn leaves, in beauty dying,
Seek the mother-breast of Earth.

Soon shall all the songless wood
Shiver in the deepening snow,
Mourning in its solitude,
Like some Rachel in her woe.

Slowly sinks yon evening sun,
Softly wanes the cheerful light,
And, the twelve hours' labor done,
Onward comes the solemn night.

So, on many a home of gladness,
Falls, O Death, thy winter gloom ;
Stands there still in doubt and sadness
Many a Mary at the tomb.

But the genial Spring, returning,
Will the sylvan pomp renew ;
And the new-born flame of morning
Kindle rainbows in the dew.

So shall God, His promise keeping,
To the world by Jesus given,
Wake our loved ones, sweetly sleeping,
At the opening dawn of heaven.

Light from darkness ! Life from death !
Dies the body, not the soul.
From the chrysalis beneath
Soars the spirit to its goal.

.

AUTUMN.

WE, too, have our Autumns when our leaves
Drop loosely through the dampened air ;
When all our good seems bound in sheaves,
And we stand reaped and bare.

Our seasons have no fixed returns ;
Without our will they come and go ;
At noon our sudden Summer burns—
Ere sunset, all is snow.

But each day brings less Summer cheer,
Cramps more our ineffectual Springs,
And something earlier, every year,
Our singing birds take wings.



Falling Leaves.

“DOWN TO SLEEP.”

DIRGE.

“DOWN TO SLEEP.”

H. H.

NOVEMBER woods are bare and still,
November days are clear and bright ;
Each noon burns up the morning's chill ;
The morning's snow is gone by night ;
Each day my steps grow slow, grow light,
As through the woods I reverent creep,
Watching all things lie “down to sleep.”

I never knew before what beds,
Fragrant to smell, and soft to touch,
The forest sifts and shapes and spreads ;
I never knew before how much
Of human sound there is in such
Low tones as through the forest sweep
When all wild things lie “down to sleep.”

Each day I find new coverlids
Tucked in, and more sweet eyes shut tight ;
Sometimes the viewless mother bids
Her ferns kneel down, full in my sight ;
I hear their chorus of “good night.”
And half I smile, and half I weep,
Listening while they lie “down to sleep.”

November woods are bare and still ;
November days are bright and good ;
Life's noon burns up life's morning chill ;
Life's night rests feet which long have stood ;
Some warm, soft bed, in field or wood,
The mother will not fail to keep,
Where we can “lay us down to sleep.”

DIRGE.

RALPH WALDO EMERSON.

Knows he who tills this lonely field,
To reap its scanty corn,
What mystic fruit his acres yield
At midnight and at morn ?

In the long sunny afternoon,
The plain was full of ghosts ;
I wandered up, I wandered down,
Beset by pensive hosts.

But they are gone,—the holy ones,
Who trod with me this lovely vale ;
The strong, star-bright companions
Are silent, low, and pale.



L. Clarkson

NOVEMBER.

HER LAST GIFT.

NOVEMBER.

NOVEMBER.

CELIA THAXTER.

THERE is no wind at all to-night
To dash the drops against the pane ;
No sound abroad, nor any light ;
And softly falls the autumn rain.

The earth lies tacitly beneath,
As it were dead to joy or pain ;
It does not move, it does not breathe ;
And softly falls the autumn rain.

And all my heart is patient too.
I wait till it shall wake again ;
For songs of Spring shall sound anew
Though sadly falls the autumn rain.

HER LAST GIFT.

MRS. S. M. B. PIATT.

COME here. I know while it was May
My mouth was your most precious rose,
My eyes your violets, as you say.
Fair words, as old as Love, are those.

I gave my Flowers while they were sweet,
And sweetly you have kept them all,
Through my slow Summer's great last heat
Into the lonely mist of Fall.

Once more I give them. Put them by,
Back in your memory's faded years—
Yet look at them, sometimes ; and try,
Sometimes, to kiss them through your tears.

NOVEMBER.

R. H. STODDARD.

THE wild November comes at last
Beneath a veil of pain ;
The night-wind blows its folds aside,—
Her face is full of pain.

The latest of her race, she takes
The Autumn's vacant throne :
She has but one short moon to live,
And she must live alone.

It is no wonder that she comes,
Poor month ! with tears of pain ;
For what can one so hopeless do
But weep, and weep again ?



L. Clarkson
November Rain.



HOAR FROST.

AUTUMN.

HOAR FROST.

L. CLARKSON.

A SUDDEN grief was in the air ;
A sigh came out of the wood ;
A white hand beckoned across the trees,—
They shivered, and understood.

Was it a bevy of woodland elves,
All dressed in red and brown,
That hurried through the chestnut boughs
And flung the dried burs down ?

Was it a flock of frightened birds,—
Brown birds with crimson breasts,—
That scurried by in reckless flight,
With snow upon their crests ?

Or were they shadows of autumn days
That passed in thronging hosts ?
The pensive and the golden hours,—
Sober or ruddy ghosts.

Perhaps the spirits of summer flowers
Were flitting overhead,
The white-winged seeds of thistles, and
The souls of roses red :

A helpless and bewildered crowd,
They lured me to a race ;
Over the fields with a gust behind,
We went in headlong chase.

And I caught a brown and startled thing
That in my face was toss'd ;
I smiled—for 'twas only a chestnut leaf
Dashed with a white hoar frost.

AUTUMN.

WILLIAM WHITELOCK.

OLD AGE with joy and sorrow fills the cup
From which its children drink from day to day ;
Yet sorrow to the surface coming up
We deem it bitter, and would turn away ;

Forgetting that it sanctifies the soul,
Its wisdom clears and purifies the sight ;
So calmly we will view the earthly goal
Which shuddering childhood turned from with affright.

The leaves of Autumn, ere they reach the ground,
Assume a beauty differing from the Spring ;
So manhood's Autumn, when by Virtue crowned,
Should to the soul a calm enjoyment bring.



Hoar Frost.

FIRST SNOW.

OCTOBER SNOW.

FIRST SNOW.

THOMAS BAILEY ALDRICH.

THE summer comes and the summer goes,
Wild flowers are fringing the dusty lanes,
The sparrows go darting through fragrant rains,
And, all of a sudden—it snows!

Dear Heart! our lives so happily flow,
So lightly, we heed not the flying hours;
We only know winter is gone—by the flowers,
We only know winter is come—by the snow!



OCTOBER SNOW.

TO LONGFELLOW ON HIS SEVENTIETH BIRTHDAY.

GEORGE P. LATHROP.

CAME once a dim October night
So still the season's quiet flow
Seemed there to pause, as if it might
In ripples back to summer go.

The heavy dusk in dreams like flowers
Unfolded thoughts of endless ease:
Loss was no more; life's coming hours
Drove winter hence with melodies.

But keen-eyed Day through frostier air
Beheld a swift age overgrow
Those flower-like dreams—for everywhere
The night had whitened into snow!

Yet youthful still the trees arose;
And leaves consumed with autumn-fire
Blushed underneath the scattered snows
With colors of the spring's desire.

And still with sweet defiance rang
A late-voiced songster's echoing note:
Time altered not the strain he sang,
Nor quenched the summer in his throat.

So in the days of youth you wrought
A spell with Voices of the Night,
And left our hearts with flower-dreams fraught,
And hush'd the seasons in their flight.

And if too soon the hoar frost throngs
Your air, O Poet of our prime,
It seeks in vain to chill your songs
Or blanch the beauty of your rhyme!



The First Snow.



PHANTOM BEECHES.

By L. Clarkson.

They are standing sheeted
In the dark
Of the year completed,
White and stark.
Through the forest roams the
lonely crow;
Gone are all the homes he
Used to know.
For the nests were blown down
In the Fall,
When the grass was mown down,
Ripe and tall.

Through the
On the
Many a storm
grim and
And the North
Oak's bald
Many chaplets
shivering
But the fir

is happy
In the storm.
His dark covering wraps he
Close and warm.
Of all trees, the fairest
Maple stands
Saddest, coldest, barest,
With her hands
Stretched out, asking cover
Of the sun;
Till that faithless lover
Cold had grown.
But the phantom fingers
Of the beech,
Clutch the robe that lingers
Holding each
Wind-blown leaf that flutters
To be free;
In low voice he mutters
Ceaselessly:-
"All the singing summer
I was green;
When the days grew dumber
And the sheen
"Of their glory faded
I was mute;
long and late I shaded
My slim root;
"But my foliage lighter
Daily grew,
And the sunshine whiter,
Filtering through.
"Now my noonday garment,
Threadbare, white,
Still shall be my cerement
Through the night.
"In my pride I know no
Vigor done
To the world I show no
Skeleton.

"When my resurrection
Robes are green,
In my new perfection,
I shall stand and wear my
Flourish best;
But I will not bare my
Naked breast
Of the woods:-
"To the curious wonder
There are gnomes in yonder
Solitudes,
We can see them prying
Through the gloom,
Laughing at this dying
Barbly doom."

For the Spring delaying
Makes us late;
While the flow'rs go Maying,
But we must wait.
At each gust-
Ah! if trees were braver,
Flowers would trust,
So the phantom beeches
Bear their grief-
Many a lesson teaches
Every leaf.

Finis.

L. Clarkson.

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